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CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES
UNDER ARTICLE 9 OF THE CONVENTION

Sixth periodic reports of States parties due in 1990

Addendum

ISRAEL*

[24 May 1991]

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* The present report constitutes the fifth and sixth periodic reports of Israel, due on 2 February 1988 and 2 February 1990 respectively, submitted in one document.

For the third and fourth periodic reports submitted by the Government of Israel and the summary records of the meetings of the Committee at which those reports were considered, see:

Third periodic report - CERD/C/113/Add.2 (CERD/C/SR.710-SR.711)
Fourth periodic report - CERD/C/144/Add.2 (CERD/C/SR.789).

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INTRODUCTION

1. This report is submitted in pursuance of article 9, paragraph 1 (b), of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination which entered into force with regard to Israel on 2 February 1979.

2. The present report supplements the initial report submitted by Israel in 1980, the periodic reports submitted in 1982 and 1984, and concerns issues and developments since the submission of the fourth periodic report in 1986.

PART I - GENERAL

3. Isreal is a nation which is justifiably proud both of its historical legacy of concern for human dignity, and of its more recent accomplishments in promoting human rights since the establishment of the State in 1948. The Government and the people of Israel share a strongly held sense of revulsion at any form of racial discrimination. This view is enshrined in the country's laws, applied in the decisions of its Supreme Court and in the policies adopted by government ministries and agencies, and informs the actions of a broad cross-section of Israel's population which is active in human-rights organizations.

4. Israel's commitment to opposing racial discrimination, and its record of successes, stands out in an area of the world where civil rights are largely unknown. That it has successfully promoted human rights in the midst of a prolonged armed struggle for its survival provides the ultimate proof of its genuine commitment to the principles enunciated in the Convention.

5. A demographic breakdown of the population of Israel is given in the following table.

Composition of the Israeli population

(published in the 1990 Statistical Abstract of Israel)

Group	1989	%
Jews	3 717 100	81.5
Muslims	655 200	14.4
Christians	107 000	2.3
Druze and others	80 300	1.8
Total	4 559 600	100.0

PART II - INFORMATION IN RELATION TO ARTICLES 2-7 OF THE CONVENTION

A. Legislative, judicial, administrative or other measures adopted for the elimination of racial discrimination

6. As an overall basic principle, enunciated in statute and affirmed by judicial decision, all laws enacted by Israel's Knesset apply equally to all of its citizens, without any permitted distinction based upon race, nationality, religion, gender or place of origin.

7. The principle of equal application of the law is not only the foundation of Israel's judicial system, it is the basic approach which informs the actions of Government at every level. It has been adopted by the employees of the civil service, and it has become the unchallengeable norm throughout Israeli society. As a result, this principle has shaped the expectations of all Israelis, and has set the standard by which they judge their own society.

8. The Government of Isreal and its courts, while committed to the principle of equal application of the law, are also aware of the diversity of Israeli society. While ensuring equality, they also support the dynamic pluralism which results from the mix of cultures, religions and languages in Israeli society. The goal is not to achieve homogeneity, but rather to ensure the protection of the rights of every citizen of Israel, while encouraging the development of each individual in his or her own way.

9. The principle of equal application of the law has practical effects even at the local level. Thus, for example, taxes collected by local authorities are spent only on services enjoyed by residents of the area, and each local council is authorized to determine and alter its own tax rates. Since members of the same community tend to live together, this ensures that no citizen is taxed, or is deprived of services for which he has paid taxes, on the basis of his group membership or religion.

10. The Government of Israel considers itself to be responsible not only for guarding against and preventing discrimination by any of its own constituent bodies, but also by government agencies and bodies throughout the country. Thus, for example, the Attorney-General of Israel assesses even municipal coalition agreements to ensure that they are not illegal or against public policy by contradicting even implicitly the principle of equality before the law.

Statutory basis for eliminating racial discrimination

11. The Penal Law, amended in 1986, defines "racism", under section 144A, as "persecution, humiliation, vilification, the display of enmity or violance, or the causing of animosity towards a community or parts of the population, all by reason of colour or racial affiliation or national-ethnic origin". Under this statute, it is irrelevant whether or not the statement or act actually caused racism. Thus, even where the offender does not succeed in his objective, it is possible to charge and try him. Also, it is not necessary for the prosecution to prove intent to incite racial hatred, but merely to establish that the accused made a statement or committed an act that objectively constitutes incitement to racism.

12. Recognizing that hatred directed against any section of Israel's population harms its society as a whole and threatens its democratic values, criminal sanctions have been imposed upon those who disseminate it. Under the Defamation Law, 1965, the Attorney-General may initiate criminal proceedings against anyone who defames any group of citizens on the basis of their race, nationality, colour, creed, or religion, and he has in fact used this power to act against racial discrimination. A conviction under this statute does not require the application of the strict test of a "clear and present danger" of damage as it does in some countries, nor are discriminatory statements regarded as protected forms of speech. In practice this statute has served as an effective deterrent to, and corrective for public expressions of racial discrimination.

13. A new Basic Law: Fundamental Human Rights (Bill) has passed first reading in the Knesset, and is currently receiving further consideration by the Law and Constitution Committee of the Knesset, pending second reading. The proposed law is based upon the democratic principles of the State and upon a recognition of the value of human life, freedom and dignity. It formally enshrines the principles of equality before the law and prohibits discrimination on the basis of religion, nationality, race, place of national origin or any other irrelevant factor. Among other rights specifically enumerated, it guarantees freedom of religion and belief, as well as the right to observe one's religion in accordance with one's faith. Although these rights and principles already exist in Israeli law, it was felt that the new statute would give them additional force and focus, as well as serve an educational and declarative purpose.

Government programmes and policies intended to guarantee the enjoyment of democratic rights to all citizens of Israel

14. The State of Israel is an almost unique example of nation-building. Its citizens are members of groups which originally had very different educational, economic, religious, professional, linguistic and cultural backgrounds. These differences have been largely overcome. While maintaining respect for the religious and cultural differences of its citizens, the disparate groups have been integrated into a multi-ethnic and multi-religious Israeli society. This success is testament to the high priority given to ensuring that all citizens enjoy the benefits of Israeli society equally. It has been achieved as a result of special sensitivity to the particular needs of the various groups which make up Israeli society, and of a commitment to reduce the gaps which existed between groups when the State was created.

15. As part of this ongoing policy, the Government of Israel adopted, on 21 April 1987, a set of resolutions designed to promote the interests of minority groups in Israel, in order to ensure complete equality for all citizens of Israel. The resolutions are designed to implement a detailed plan which includes: the classification of some villages and settlements as development areas, with all of the attendant benefits; enhanced education facilities and programmes; improvements in the availability and terms of mortgages; encouragement of industrial development; professional training; increased provision of industrial infrastructure; increased budgets for regional councils; and coordination between the various ministries involved to facilitate the provision of services.

16. Services which are provided to municipalities and regional councils by the national Government, such as, for example, those concerning health, education, or the police, are provided without distinction between communities, and all citizens of Israel enjoy a standard level of services. Moreover, the amounts spent for services by local authorities do not include the amounts spent by the Ministry of the Interior, or other ministries, which are disbursed equally for all Israeli citizens, except where special programmes necessitate higher expenditures. Of course, payments made by the Government's National Insurance Institute, under its complete range of programmes (e.g. welfare, children's assistance, widow's benefits, etc.) are not differentiated for members of different religions or national groups. All entitled citizens receive equal payments.

17. As a result of the programme designed to close gaps between groups which existed at the creation of the State in 1948, and the focused attention paid to them, local and regional development plans are more advanced among the Arab sector of the population than among any other group. These plans facilitate the orderly, efficient and appropriate development of settlements, villages and towns to meet the expanding needs of their residents.

18. Special programmes were instituted in 1961 and have been expanded since then, under the coordination of the Prime Minister's Office, with the objective of improving the physical infrastructure of Arab communities. These have included programmes to improve water supply, road networks and sewage systems, to expand educational buildings and public facilities such as community centres, and to ensure the complete electrification of all settlements. This has led to a dramatic improvement in the quality of life in every large community, and in almost all of the smaller ones. However, since these communities enjoyed fewer facilities than did the Jewish ones when Israel was established in 1948, these programmes will continue until the gaps between the various communities which make up Israeli society, already much smaller than they were originally, are closed completely.

19. As part of this official affirmative action approach aimed at securing improvements at the community level, Arab villages and municipalities receive substantial grants from the Ministry of the Interior. For example, the town of Um-El-Fahm received a grant of NIS 13.5 million in 1989. Perhaps more importantly, this community was recently granted the status of a municipality, which accorded it expanded rights and powers, and enhanced the scope of its independent decision-making ability.

20. Similarly, large-scale programmes have been instituted in the health field, to ensure that all citizens have equal access to medical facilities and services. Health services, including the distribution of local and mobile clinics, access to health centres and hospitals, availability of ambulances, and access to health information and advice, are available to all citizens without distinction. However, additional efforts have been made to reduce pre-existing gaps between various sectors of the population. Thus, while the average life expectancy of an Arab citizen in 1948 was 55 years, today it is 73 years for a man and 76 years for a woman, the same as for Jewish citizens. Similarly, infant mortality rates among the Arab population during the same period have fallen from 65 per 1,000 live births to 15 per 1,000 live births. These are the results of a massive effort to improve the provision of

health services to all sectors of Israeli society. Moreover, the Ministry of Health and Magen David Adom have made a clear and successful effort to train Arab health-care workers, and to ensure fair employment practices for minorities in all capacities, including doctors, nurses, paramedics, ambulance teams, and as administrators. There is also a special programme to teach first aid in Arab schools and communities.

21. As noted in previous reports, particular attention has been focused on improving the educational programmes and facilities available to Arab primary and high school students. While recognizing the cultural and religious requirements of minority students, the objective of this effort has been to enable all citizens of Israel to function equally well in society, to enter and complete university programmes, and to compete for employment in all fields. In fact, the education system in the Arab sector has expanded dramatically since the creation of the State of Israel - there are now 50 times as many Arab students at the primary and high school level as there were in 1948.

22. Similarly, Government-sponsored educational benefits at the university level, including loans and grants, which are connected to military service, are available equally to all citizens who have completed military service, regardless of their group membership or sex. In this respect, it is important to recall that while Israel has not imposed compulsory national military service on some of its non-Jewish citizens (Druze and Circassian citizens are drafted at the request of their communities), it does acknowledge the sense of national obligation felt by all citizens. As a result, citizens who are not subject to the military draft are nevertheless permitted to volunteer for military service, and throughout Israel's history, many citizens who are members of minority groups not subject to compulsory service have volunteered to do national military service, a trend which has increased in recent years.

23. A complementary effort, funded by the Government, has been made to expand the number and facilities of community centres and neighbourhood clubs available to children and young adults in Arab villages and neighbourhoods. The scout movement and various sports clubs, associations and leagues, which also operate with government assistance, have extensive youth programmes. These are all the result of an awareness that education and full participation in Israeli society are not the sole responsibility of the school system, but require the additional dedication of funds and effort on the part of the State.

24. The recognition on the part of the Government of the need for special efforts to address the needs of minority populations has had far-ranging applications. For example, the Ministry of Agriculture has instituted special programmes of instruction for Arab farmers to ensure that they benefit from the latest developments in agricultural technology and techniques. These include programmes to increase agricultural yield and to improve water management. The Ministry of Agriculture also ensures that Arab farmers participate fully in Israel's agricultural export programmes. Interestingly, although most of the land in Israel is not owned privately but is held in trust by the State for the benefit of all citizens, the majority of privately owned land is held by Arab owners.

25. Israel has made a special effort to ensure that its Arab citizens are able to preserve their connections with family members who reside in Arab countries, even when those countries are in a state of war with Israel, such

as Syria, Jordan and Saudi Arabia. Perhaps unique in the history of inter-State conflict, Israel permits thousands of its citizens to travel to these countries every year, despite the very tangible price it pays in increased threats to its security as a result. Israel has also emphasized repeatedly the importance with which it views the religious obligation of its Moslem citizens to observe the hadj. Israel has made a genuine effort to ensure that this right of its Moslem citizens is protected and to facilitate their journeys, with the result that every year thousands of Israeli citizens do travel to Saudi Arabia. A further indication of Israel's commitment to prevent discrimination on the basis of religion and to promote successful coexistence between disparate groups of citizens is the funding, by the Government, through the Office of the Prime Minister and the Ministry of Religious Affairs, of mosques and other religious buildings and facilities for Israel's Arab citizens. As a result, there are approximately 20 times as many mosques today as there were in 1948.

Supreme Court decisions concerning the elimination of racial discrimination

26. The Supreme Court of Israel has played a key role in combating discrimination on the basis of race or religion, and in expanding multi-cultural cooperation. Its activities, based on the broad statutory framework of protections, have also served to support complementary governmental programmes and initiatives.

27. The Supreme Court, sitting as the High Court of Justice, has made several clear statements of the principles which guide its judgements. Many of these statements were reiterated in a recent judgement which declared that:

> "Everyone in Israel enjoys the freedom of conscience, faith, religion and worship. This freedom is guaranteed to every person ... in Israel by virtue of its being one of the foundations on which the State of Israel rests. This freedom is anchored partly in Article 83 of the Palestine Order in Council 1922, and partly it belongs to the 'basic rights that are not written in a book but derive directly from the nature of our State as a democratic and freedom-loving State'. Pursuant to these norms - and what is stated in the Declaration of Independence - every statute and every law will be interpreted as recognizing freedom of conscience, faith, religion and worship. The Declaration of Independence assured freedom of religion and worship to all State citizens ... it provided a pattern of life for citizens of the State and requires every State authority to be guided by its principles." (H.C. 292/83 Temple Mount Faithful and others v Commander of the Jerusalem Area Police, 38 II P.D. 449 at 454).

28. The Court has been extremely sensitive to the concerns of Israel's minority populations in a number of different respects. This has required, in some instances, a careful balancing of the rights guaranteed in a democratic society. For example, a group recently requested official permission to hold a public demonstration in a place which might offend the religious sensibilities of another section of Israel's society. The High Court of Justice held that no permission to worship was needed by anyone since the right to freedom of conscience, belief, religion and worship is absolutely guaranteed in Israel. However, as with any other right, it cannot be exercised in a way which would interfere with others' rights, or which would raise concern for public safety. (Temple Mount Faithful, supra).

29. A recent petition to the High Court of Justice requested that permission which had been denied for specific security reasons be granted for an Israeli citizen to travel to Saudi Arabia, a country at war with Israel. The petitioner wanted to fulfil the religious duty of making the pilgrimage to Mecca. The Court emphasized the importance of the principle of freedom of movement and recognized the obligation of the State to enable its Moslem citizens to practise their religion, even if allowing travel to a country at war with Israel created security dangers. It noted also Israel's record in such cases, mentioning that only 1 per cent of all requests to go on the hadj were refused, and only then on the basis of clear security threats to the State. (H.C. 488/83 Baransi and others v Minister of Interior and others, 37 III P.D. 722 at 724-5).

30. The Supreme Court has also shown its willingness to support Government-initiated affirmative action programmes in both the school and the workplace, which are designed to redress differences between the various sectors of Israeli society. Thus, the Court has upheld special benefits and programmes granted by the Ministry of Education to disadvantaged students, as well as the measures designed to increase the number of these students in institutions of higher education. When a group of parents challenged a Ministry of Education policy designed to integrate schools, which required that their children attend schools not in their neighbourhoods and not of their choice, the Supreme Court rejected their arguments, although it acknowledged their legitimate concerns. It favoured society's interest in a reform designed to produce social integration and diminish intercommunal friction, over the parent's nevertheless legitimate right to choose which school their children attend.

B. Policies adopted by the Government of Israel to condemn and oppose apartheid

31. Israel has enunciated a clear position condemning apartheid, and on 18 March 1987, the Government of Israel adopted the following measures, in order to implement its long-standing policy critical of apartheid.

"(a) to reiterate its total condemnation of the policy of apartheid;

(b) to continue to curtail Israel's relations with South Africa;

(c) to refrain from new undertakings between Israel and South Africa in the realm of defence;

(d) to assign a small working group the task of examining, within two months, recommendations regarding the approach to be adopted towards South Africa in line with the policy in practice in the Free World."

32. On 16 September 1987, the Government of Israel adopted the following measures regarding Israel's relations with South Africa.

"(a) no new investments in South Africa will be approved. Proposed exceptions will be brought to a committee consisting of the Ministry of Finance, the Bank of Israel, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs;

(b) the Government will:

1. prohibit the granting of government loans;

2. prohibit the sale and transfer of oil and its products;

3. prohibit the import of Kruger Rands;

all the above measures are similar to the decisions of the Common Market on these matters;

(c) the import quota for iron and steel will be frozen so that imports will not exceed the present volume;

(d) cultural ties between the countries will conform to the State of Israel's basic negative view of the apartheid régime;

(e) sports ties with South Africa will be subject to the decisions of the international sports associations;

(f) the Ministry of Tourism and any other official body will not actively support the promotion of tourism to South Africa;

(g) no new agreements will be signed in the area of science;

(h) no visits to South Africa by civil servants will be made, unless approved by an interministerial committee in which a representative from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is participating;

(i) the Government of Israel will act to establish a fund to assist the implementation of training programmes in Israel - in educational, cultural, and social fields - for participants from the black and coloured communities of South Africa;

(j) all necessary steps will be taken to prevent Israel from becoming a transit station of any kind for goods and services from and to South Africa, if that might involve circumventing sanctions imposed by a third party."

33. On 30 November 1988, Ambassador David Matnai stated to the sixty-fifth meeting of the forty-third session of the General Assembly (A/43/PV.65):

"For many years now, a steady flow of representatives from the State of Israel has come up to this rostrum and expressed Israel's categorical rejection of South Africa's system of apartheid. Today, I join my predecessors in once again voicing Israel's total opposition to and rejection of apartheid. We condemn it as we condemn racism in all its forms. It is an expression of man's cruelest inhumanity. It is a moral evil of the first order. It has no place in our world. It should be eradicated whenever and wherever it surfaces ...".

34. He further stated that:

> "The painful history of the Jewish people has shaped our unequivocal repudiation of South Africa's apartheid system as well as all other forms of racial discrimination around the world. In Jerusalem, our Parliament - the Knesset - has adopted a number of anti-apartheid resolutions. The Government of Israel and its leaders, past and present, have issued solemn declarations protesting against apartheid. Our representatives around the world have signed joint communiqués with African leaders reiterating our opposition to apartheid, and on numerous occasions we have spoken out and made our position clear before various organs and agencies of the United Nations".

35. On 13 December 1989, Ambassador Johanan Bein, the Acting Permanent Representative of Israel to the United States, stated to the Sixteenth Special Session of the General Assembly on Apartheid and its Destructive Consequences in Southern Africa (A/S-16/PV.4):

> "Apartheid is an abomination for every Israeli, for every Jew, for every Zionist. It is totally unacceptable both as an ideology and a political system. We in Israel share in the pain of those suffering under its yoke. Apartheid must be abolished. It should be banished forever."

36. In explaining the basis of Israel's deeply felt condemnation of apartheid, Ambassador Bein noted that:

> "Israel's abhorrence of apartheid stems also from the nature of its contemporary society. Israel is a multiracial society composed of some 100 ethnic groups of all shades and colours. It is the most colour-blind nation in the world, a society both democratic and pluralistic."

37. He concluded that:

> "On the declarative level, Israel's revulsion and total opposition to apartheid has been enunciated so often, in so many forums, by the Government, Presidents, Prime Ministers, Foreign Ministers and by hosts of other Israeli leaders, that it should be quite self-evident by now. Representatives of Israel around the world have issued solemn declarations protesting apartheid and reaffirming our total condemnation of its ideology and practice. These declarations reflect Israeli public opinion which regards apartheid as anathema to Zionism and the fundamental values upon which Israeli society is predicated.
>
> "On an operative level, the Government of Israel has instituted far-reaching measures against South Africa which served as an example to other western democracies. Since the implementation of these measures in March 1987, Israel has continued to curtail its associations with South Africa. We have banned all investments in South Africa and all scientific cooperation, we have severed all cultural ties with South African organizations connected in any way with the apartheid régime. Israeli athletes are prohibited from taking part in sport events in South Africa. There is no promotion of tourism, and official visits are prohibited".

38. On 19 June 1986, Ambassador Ephraim Dowek stated to the seventy-second session of the International Labour Conference in Geneva:

> "My delegation says with force, without the slightest hesitation or afterthought: Israel and the Jewish people reject and condemn apartheid in the most categoric and unequivocal manner - both as an ideology and as a political system. Together with the entire community of nations, they call upon South Africa to abolish apartheid, to desist from any kind of racial discrimination and to grant full and equal rights to all its citizens - black, white and coloured. Israel and the Jewish people tell Africa and the world, publicly and unequivocally: We are with you in the just struggle to eliminate apartheid and all forms of racial discrimination ...
>
> "Israel's diplomatic ties with South Africa and its very limited commercial relations with it, in no way imply supporting or condoning apartheid. The Government of Israel has repeatedly stressed before the South African Government its total rejection of apartheid and of all regulations and laws based on racial discrimination. It has never ceased to call upon South Africa, forcefully, to rescind all measures that contravene the basic liberties of its citizens ...
>
> "For Israel, the only possible solution, the only solution that will bring peace and harmony to all sectors of the South African population, is indeed the total abolishment of apartheid by law and the eradication of any and all forms of discrimination in daily life. It is also our belief that the South African Government should be encouraged to go in the direction of a permanent and constructive dialogue, at the national as well as at the international level."

C. Israel's response to the election of Meir Kahane to the Knesset

39. In the Fourth Periodic Report submitted by the Government of Israel, the measures adopted to respond to the activities of Mr. Meir Kahane, leader of the Kach Party, were described in some detail. As a result of the particular abhorrence which his racist policies engendered throughout Israeli society, further measures were subsequently adopted.

40. The Knesset itself responded directly to the threat posed to Israel's democratic and egalitarian character by Mr. Kahane's activities by changing its own rules. The Rules of Procedure were amended, permitting the Presidium to refuse to bring before the Knesset bills that were of a racist nature or that violated the democratic nature of the State.

41. Prior to this amendment, Mr. Kahane had submitted legislation to the Presidium of the Knesset and the speaker refused to bring it before the Knesset because it was, in his view, unworthy of debate due to its racist content. Mr. Kahane then requested the High Court of Justice to order the Speaker of the Knesset to submit the legislation to the floor.

42. Due to the lacuna in the Knesset's Rules of Procedure, corrected by the amendment described above, the Court accepted Mr. Kahane's petition, but concluded:

> "We understand the feelings of the Speaker of the Knesset and his Deputies. We too, as they, believe that the petitioner's two bills are an affront to basic principles of our constitutional system, arouse horrifying memories and serve to damage the democratic character of the State of Israel. If despite this we believe that they should be placed on the agenda of the Knesset, it is precisely because of those same democratic values held dear by the Speaker of the Knesset and his Deputies, and which the petitioner seeks to harm. Our strength is in strict observance of the rule of law and of the legality of rule, even when this entails giving expression to opinions we find abhorrent. The insistence on the principle of the rule of law, including the rule of law in the legislature, is essential to our national life. We are certain that the Speaker of the Knesset and the Deputies are determined to protect these fundamental values. It is this determination that must enable them to overcome the difficulties, which we well appreciate in raising the petitioner's proposals before the Knesset plenum. Indeed, in the existing legal framework, the way to deal with the beliefs of the petitioner is through the democratic verdict of the Knesset plenum." (H.C. 742/84 Kahane v Speaker of the Knesset and others, 39 IV P.D. 85).

43. In fact, the legislation was never discussed by the Knesset because the matter was delayed until the Rules of Procedure were amended, and the Speaker was empowered to refuse to submit it to the floor due to its racist content.

44. Perhaps the most significant and far-reaching response to Meir Kahane's election was the amendment of the Basic Law: The Knesset. In order to ensure that candidates promoting racism are not eligible to run for Israel's Knesset, article 7A (3) of the law now reads:

> "A list of candidates will not be eligible to participate in elections for the Knesset if there appears among its objectives or by its actions, either explicitly or implicitly, one of the following:
>
> "[...]
>
> "(3) incitement to racism;" (12 Laws of the State of Israel, 85).

45. In summing up Israel's clear and decisive response to Meir Kahane's promotion of racism, it is important to note that it would have been possible to oppose him and to disallow his party ultimately on the grounds that it was anti-democratic. However, Israel's Knesset, acting on behalf of Israeli society, considered it preferable to focus on the party's racist and discriminatory features and to explicitly disqualify it on those grounds.

D. Non-governmental civil rights activities

46. Israel has a deeply entrenched and long-standing commitment to human rights and to democratic principles, which is reflected in its statutes, the decisions of its courts and the policies of its government ministries. This commitment is demonstrated further by the public's widespread participation

in non-governmental organizations which pursue human and civil rights in a variety of ways. Some are devoted to a single aspect of the effort to promote human rights, some approach it on a broad front, some by utilizing the courts, and others through public education or pilot programmes. Taken together, they show a sincere devotion by a large sector of Israel's population to civil rights, and the willingness to back that sentiment with time and effort. Perhaps more significantly, it shows that Israeli society, although justifiably proud of its achievements in the area of civil rights, is continually seeking to expand the ambit of rights to be protected. Additionally, many organizations and institutions not directly devoted to eliminating racial discrimination have adopted policies and instituted programmes intended to combat racial discrimination, redress previous errors or weaknesses, or actively promote understanding and cooperation among different sectors of Israeli society.

47. The Association for Civil Rights in Israel (ACRI), established in 1972, has increasingly become one of the most visible, successful and influential civil rights organizations in Israel. It is a non-partisan, apolitical organization devoted to the protection and furtherance of human rights and civil liberties in Israel and in the territories under its control. It is supported entirely by members' dues and contributions and by grants from philanthropic sources. Its members live throughout the country, and are drawn from all walks of life. Its principal activities include: initiating litigation designed to establish civil rights principles; maintaining direct approaches to governmental and other authorities for the redress of civil rights violations; the provision of expert assistance to legislators in the drafting of civil rights laws; the promotion of civil liberties as a subject of study in the schools, the army, the police and other institutions; the training of teachers and educators in the presentation of civil rights issues; and the publication and dissemination of information and teaching materials on the subject of civil rights.

48. The ACRI has enjoyed a high degree of success both in promoting public awareness of and sensitivity to civil rights issues, and in challenging specific practices which fall short of Israel's democratic standards.

49. A number of Israel's universities, such as Tel-Aviv University, have affirmative action programmes intended to make higher education available equally to all Israelis. Taking into account the relative weakness of the Arab educational system, which, although improving steadily as a result of Government programmes, is still not fully compatible in some respects with the educational system as a whole, Tel-Aviv University also considers an applicant's ethnic origin, as well as other factors, in making admission decisions, giving preference to Arab students. Throughout Israel's system of higher education, the number of Arab students studying at universities has increased by more than five times since 1971.

50. Similarly, some political parties have amended their constitutions in a manner which ensures, through minimum numerical standards, the representation of members of Israel's minorities. These policies are seen as strengthening Israel's political culture.